

THE  
JUDGMENT of GOD  
UPON  
**Atheism and Infidelity,**  
In a Brief and True  
ACCOUNT  
OF THE  
*Irreligious* LIFE, and  
*Miserable* DEATH  
OF  
**Mr. George Edwards.**

Late of *Stratford*, in the County  
of *Essex*, who **Murder'd** Himself  
*January* the 4th, 1704.

With a RELATION of several *Conferences*  
with him; a Copy of his *Letter* in defence of his  
*Atheistical Opinions*, and an *Answer* to the same.

By JOHN SMITH, *Vicar* of *Westham*.

*Iſa. xlv. 9. Woe unto him that ſtriveth with his Maker.*  
*Gal. vi. 7. Be not deceived, God is not mocked.*

The Second Edition.

*London*: Printed by G. Groom, for D. Brown, at the  
*Black-Swan and Bible*, without *Temple-Bar*; and J.  
*Taylor*, at the *Ship* in *St. Paul's Church-Yard*. 1704.

THE  
JUDGMENT OF GOD

UPON

William and Mary

In a Brief and True

ACCOUNT

OF THE

Irreligious LIFE, and

Miserable DEATH

OF

Mr. George Edwards.

Last of June, in the County  
of Essex, who had lived

many years.

IN A RELATION  
WITH HIS OWN CONSCIENCE  
AND HIS OWN DEATH.

By JOHN SMITH, New York  
1704.

Printed by J. Smith, at the  
Sign of the Anchor, in the  
City of New York.

Printed by J. Smith, at the  
Sign of the Anchor, in the  
City of New York.



A B R I E F  
I N T R O D U C T I O N

To the following

N A R R A T I O N.

**A**S I happen'd on the 6th of Jan.  
last, to be at the House of my  
Reverend and Worthy Friend Mr. Stripe,  
of Low-Leyton, He ask'd me concern-  
ing the miserable End of Mr. George  
Edwards, late of my Parish, who, two  
Days before, had shot himself to Death.  
After I had given him some short Ac-  
count of him, and of that unnatural  
and wicked Action, I told him, I had  
observ'd, how, within a few Tears past,  
besides the Famous Ch. Bl. several other  
A z Persons

Persons of Atheistical Principles, who had made it their Business to vilify Scripture, and run down Religion, had as I thought, by the just Judgment of God for their wilful resisting Light and Truth, and for their Obstinacy in Unbelief, been given up to Madness and Folly, even to lay violent Hands upon themselves. They who had so long abused their own Reason, and the Grace of God, being justly by him deprived of both, and left to the Instigation of the Devil, and their own desperate Passions. My Friend did not see any thing of Uncharitableness in this Observation, but wish'd that others would take notice of, and that such fearful Manifestations of God's Judgments upon Impious and Ungodly Men, might be a Warning to all. Wherefore, in pursuance of this Reflection, he wrote to me a few Days after, that I would publish something of this Business, as first, to relate the Matter of Fact; give some Account of his Life, and of his Principles, and thereof of the Conferences I had with him, with



his Letter to me, and mine to him,  
 verbatim. I return'd an immediate  
 Answer, That I could not but acknow-  
 ledge the good Design of such a Rela-  
 tion, tho' it was not in my Thoughts  
 till he propos'd it to me: That some  
 Years being past since our Conference,  
 and the Letters not intended for Pub-  
 lick View, and lying confused with ma-  
 ny Papers, it would take more Leisure  
 to recollect and put things into any to-  
 lerable Order, than I had in this large  
 Parish. So I excus'd my self for the  
 present, yet, with a Promise to think  
 further of it. Now, having upon se-  
 cond Thoughts consider'd, That we ought  
 to lay hold of all Opportunities of con-  
 vincing ATHEISTS, or at least,  
 of arming Christian People against their  
 Impious Principles; I think I ought  
 not to let go so fair an Occasion as  
 this remarkable JUDGMENT of  
 GOD will afford, of deterring all from  
 entertaining such loose and ungodly Opi-  
 nions. Wherefore the Reader will find  
 here a plain and faithful Narration  
 of

( 6 )

of Matters of Fact, with some Practical Exhortations at the End, hoping it may be of some use, by the Blessing of God, if not to recover the Profligate, and already infected, yet to preserve the Well-meaning from such detestable Errors, and to confirm the Pious in their stedfast Belief of our most Holy Religion.



THE  
JUDGMENT  
of  
GOD will afford of deterring all from  
these a plain and faithful Exposition  
of

# THE JUDGMENT of GOD

UPON

**Atheism and Infidelity,**

In a Brief and True

# ACCOUNT

OF THE

**Irreligious Life, and Miserable Death**

OF

**Mr. George Edwards, &c.**

**M**R. George Edwards, was born at *Playstoe*, in the Parish of *Westham*, in the Year 1661, and brought up, by his Parents, with some sort of Strictness; and being come to the Age of 27, or thereabout, he married a very Vertuous and Pious young Woman, with a considerable

siderable Fortune, and had himself a competent  
 Estate left him by his Father. He was for several  
 Years after he married, very industrious in  
 his Worldly Affairs, and diligent in his particu-  
 lar Calling. He had good natural Parts, and  
 was shrew'd enough in human Concerns; but  
 had entertain'd some Prejudices against Religion,  
 which made him loose and careless on that Ac-  
 count. He came seldom to Church; gave little  
 Credit to Scripture; believed nothing of a future  
 State; but look'd upon Religion as the Device  
 of Men, and usually said, *All Things came by  
 Nature.* This Course of Life, and these Princi-  
 ples, were very uneasy to his Wife, who is a Wo-  
 man of great Goodness and Piety; for tho' he  
 was kind as an Husband, yet having espous-  
 ed such unchristian Principles, she had many  
 restless Thoughts, and continual Concernment up-  
 on her for the good of his Soul. Whereupon  
 she came to me, in the Year, as I remember,  
 1698, lamenting his Case, and desiring that I  
 would take some convenient time to discourse with  
 him about his Opinions. I told her I would;  
 and a few Months after, when he came to re-  
 ceive Money of me for the Drink we took of him;  
 after I had paid him, we went into the Garden,  
 and I began to discourse with him to this purpose:  
*Mr. Edwards, I hear you have embraced some very  
 odd Opinions: It is said, you do not believe there is  
 any God, or that we have Immortal Souls... Is it  
 so or not? I shall discover nothing to your Preju-  
 dice, but endeavour to satisfy you if I can.* He  
 answer'd, *He had such Thoughts; for he believ'd  
 that all things came by Nature; and that when we  
 died*



ed there was an End of us ; and that Things were  
 the World as they always had been, and so they  
 ould continue for ever. I ask'd him what he  
 meant by Nature ? And said to him, Look  
 on these Plants ; they must have a Maker, they  
 ould not come of themselves ; and do not you see  
 great Wisdom and Contrivance in the various Co-  
 lours, and curious Composure of the Parts of every  
 one of them ? It is impossible they should be the Ef-  
 fects of Chance, or of a blind Principle ; and there-  
 fore, if by Nature you mean an universal Power or  
 Being, that acts with Wisdom and Goodness, 'tis but  
 another Name for God. As to your Saying, That  
 Things are in the World as they always have  
 been..... Do not you see that there is in the World  
 continual Succession of Causes and Effects.... Is it  
 plain that nothing can make it self ? Is it not  
 visible every Day, that one thing proceeds from ano-  
 ther ; that your Son is begotten by you, as you were  
 your Father ; and that none of your Progenitors  
 was any more able to make himself, than you were  
 to make your self ? From whence it clearly follows, that  
 there must have been one first in every Kind : There  
 must have been a first Man, formed by the supreme  
 Being ; and consequently, Things are not in the World  
 as they always were, but had Beginning from G O D,  
 the independent Cause and Creator of all ; and if so,  
 they must have an End, since the same G O D has  
 declared they shall, and therefore will not continue  
 ever as they are. Then I said, As to your  
 self, do you think there is nothing about you but Flesh,  
 Blood and Bones ? He answer'd, No, not he. I  
 asked, What is that which thinks and contrives ;  
 which considers and examines ; which argues and  
 disputes,



disputes ; which looks to times past, present and future ; which Forms Ideas of invisible Things, and takes the whole World into its Thoughts.... Is it nothing but Matter ? He said, He could not tell, but he thought not. After some more Discourse about these, and such like things, he went away ; and I lent him a Volume of Dr. Scot, about the Being of GOD, and his Providence ; and the proper Method with the *Deists* ; and desir'd him to read over those Books carefully, which, I hoped, would give him more satisfaction than my running Discourse could do ; and when he had read them, desir'd he would come to me again.

After some Weeks, he return'd with the Book. I asked him, If he had read them ; and whether they gave him any satisfaction ? He said, He had read them all over ; that they were as well written as such Books could be ; that the Authors of them were learned Men, but they did not convince him ; he could not believe. I said, Have they not fairly proposed and cleared all the Difficulties ? Have they not fully proved what they undertook ? Or have you any other Objections which they have not answered ? What do you think of Scripture, do not you believe the truth of that ? He replied, Ha, grant that, and grant all. If Scripture be proved to be of Divine Authority, then all your Religion follows, and your Doctrines are easily accountable. I asked, What have you to say against the Antiquity and Divine Authority of the Holy Scriptures, which have been delivered to us with such an unanimous and constant Tradition of its Divine Original, that it was written in those times, and by those inspired Persons it pretends to ? He said, There were many Impossi-

the World; that the Books of Scripture might be  
 written in dark Times, and so get Authority by de-  
 ces..... Besides, the Protestants and Papists, Luthe-  
 rans and Calvinists, accuse one another of corrupting  
 Scripture, and of many Faults in their Translations;  
 and he could not tell what was true. I told him,  
 these were meer Conjectures and Cavils; that the  
 several Parties accused one another only of Faults in  
 their Translations; the Original Hebrew and Greek  
 could not be proved to have been corrupted; that our  
 English Translation was as exact as any that  
 extant; and that the Bible, tho' some of it was  
 4000 Years standing, had all the Characters of  
 Truth and Sincerity, and was handed to us with all  
 Proofs and Evidence of its Truth that a Writ-  
 ing was capable of; and if we were convinced of  
 its Truth, we could not deny its Divinity; and that  
 whether he, nor any one else, could prove a Deed or  
 conveyance of an Estate from his Ancestors, 150  
 Years past, with that Fulness and Strength of Evi-  
 dence, that we could the Authority of Scripture, as  
 it had been done by several learned Men. Then I  
 said, Pray Mr. Edwards, what was it that led you  
 to these Atheistical Opinions? I am sure they  
 were not born with you, neither were they taught you  
 by your Parents; how came you to question the Being  
 of GOD, and the Truth of Scripture? He reply'd  
 that, Why there is scarce any I see that believes  
 in Divinity, for if People did really believe these things,  
 would they live as they do? If such and such  
 notorious Dissenters did indeed believe that there was  
 a GOD, and Judgment to come, would they be so  
 false and Knavish, so Hypocritical and Malicious,  
 as to be so blacable and Uncharitable, Factious and Worldly?

If such and such constant Church-men did in truth believe their Creed, would they be so Intemperate and Prophane, so Sensual, Debauched and Covetous? For, on my Part, if I believed there was a G O D; that the Scripture is his Word; that our Souls are Immortal; that there is an Heaven and an Hell, I should live quite otherwise. This, I confess, was a smart and surprizing Answer; and it bears very hard upon Wicked Men of all Parties, whose Unchristian Lives contradict the Holy Faith which they profess; how they would answer for themselves, I know not: But thus I reply'd to Mr. Edwards and that the more largely, because he stuck upon it, and was ready to take all for Infidels or Hypocrites. I said to him, *Tho' there are too many whose Actions are contrary to what they pretend to believe, yet, you cannot deny, but there are others who live according to their Profession, who will not do an ill Thing; who are Just and Merciful; Kind and Ingenuous; Sober and Devout; Faithful and Honest upon all Accounts, and who, abating Human Frailty, live exemplary and holy Lives.* Yes, he said, *that was true, there were some.* Then, said I, *as for others, whose Works are opposite to their Faith, then it is not one of them but would think you did them a very great Injury, if you should charge them with Atheism, or Disbelieving Scripture.* He said, *He thought they would.* Therefore, said I, *you must not conclude, that these do not believe the Being of G O D, the Truth of Scripture; the Immortality of the Soul; much less that there is no G O D, or that the Scripture is not true.... You may justly conclude they are very Inconsiderate and Wicked, and Self-condemning; and tho' no good reason can possibly be given why*

true they should act thus, yet it is not hard to give ac-  
 count why they do act in this contradictory manner.  
 For, first, tho' Repentance be the peculiar Grace of  
 the Gospel, and the only Refuge of Sinners, yet this  
 mighty Favour of GOD, is too often abused by  
 wicked Men; and the hopes of recovering themselves by  
 Repentance, occasions many to commit those Sins which  
 they know are damnable; and besides, as it is very fre-  
 quent for People to sin against Light and Conscience, so  
 it is not only possible, but too common for them, to prac-  
 tise quite contrary to the speculative Notions of their  
 Minds. For the generality of Men, in their Actions,  
 are led by their Lusts and Passions, their sensual  
 Appetites, and temporal Interests, and not by the  
 Principles of Truth which lie in their Understandings.  
 Do you not see every Day, how many act contrary  
 to the Laws of the Land? Do they not steal, break  
 open Houses, rob on the High-way, commit Murder...  
 tho' they know what severe Laws there are against  
 all these Crimes, and often see Persons executed for  
 the same wicked Deeds? Now as you cannot pretend  
 that those profligate Creatures do not believe the  
 Laws of the Land against Robbery and Burglary,  
 neither may you justly conclude, that those do not  
 believe the Being of GOD, the Truth of Scripture,  
 who openly sin against GOD, and daily transgress  
 the Holy Precepts of his Word. Their wicked Lives,  
 is a great Dishonour to GOD, and a mighty  
 scandal to Religion, but 'tis no Argument against  
 the Truth of his Being, or the certainty of our Faith;  
 because it is obvious to daily Experience, that Men  
 have a Power to act against the Voice of Conscience,  
 and to live in direct opposition to the speculative  
 notions they entertain in their Minds, as might be  
 further



*further shewn in the Fatalists, and rigid Predestina-*  
*rians, who usually manage their Affairs, and govern*  
*their Lives, not according to the Scheme of their*  
*own Principles, but as the rest of Mankind. Then*  
*I asked, Pray what Books do you read? I am*  
*afraid some bad Authors have put these Opinions*  
*into your Head. He said, No; he had very good*  
*Books; and named Judge Hales's Origination of*  
*Mankind, and Bishop Wilkins Natural Religion.*  
*These, said I, are very good Books; read them atten-*  
*tively and impartially, and I do not question, but they'll*  
*give you satisfaction. He said, He had read them,*  
*and there was abundance of Learning in them, but*  
*that did not convince him. I told him, He must be*  
*content with such Evidence as the Nature of the Things*  
*would bear.... That as the Belief of the Being of GOD;*  
*the Immortality of the Soul, and Divine Authority of*  
*Scripture, were to an unprejudiced Mind, infinitely*  
*more rational than the contrary; so supposing these*  
*things to be true, we could not have fuller Evidence*  
*of their certainty than we have. And after some*  
*other Discourse, I advised him to read these Books*  
*he mentioned, seriously, for it was a Matter of*  
*the vastest Concern to him, and read the Scrip-*  
*ture with an humble and obedient Heart, and*  
*come to Church, and be in the Way of his Duty;*  
*it might please GOD to open the Eyes of his*  
*Understanding, and give him Knowledge of the*  
*Truth. And said I, Pray to GOD to enlighten your*  
*Mind, but.... recalling my self, how can you pray*  
*that do not believe! He gave me a dejected Look,*  
*and then took his leave.*

This, so far as I can remember, was about the  
 beginning of the Year 1699, after which, I had



Conversation with him about his Opinions,  
 or near two Years. Hitherto I thought him sin-  
 cere, only labouring under some strong Prejudices ;  
 or he told me, *He was as willing the Points we*  
*discoursed of should be true as I was ; but he could not*  
*believe.* I had not yet heard any ill Character of  
 him for his Morals, as that he was given to Pro-  
 faneness or Intemperance ; but was just in his  
 Dealings, regular in his Life, very industrious in  
 his Calling, and one that would spend little or  
 nothing : Wherefore I had the more hopes, that  
 in time, the Grace of GOD, and better Infor-  
 mation might recover him ; so I spoke not of his  
 Opinions to any. But in the beginning of Septem-  
 ber, 1700, he was guilty of such a prophane and  
 religious Action, as gave great offence to the  
 Congregation, was a mighty trouble to me, and  
 gave me occasion to speak often with him. Up-  
 on the first Sunday in the Month he came to the  
 Communion, in a slovenly Dress, with his Brewers  
 Stock, and dirty Neckcloth ; but this was of little  
 consequence, had not his inward Man been more  
 filthy and polluted than his outward Habit. The  
 Reverend Mr. B.... who on these Days is so kind  
 to assist me, gave him the Bread, which he  
 catch'd out of his Hand ; and when I came to  
 give him the Cup, I did not know him, being in  
 the Pew, and my Eyes are bad : I thought him to  
 have been some Seaman : He standing up, I  
 intimated for him to kneel, which he did immedi-  
 ately, saying, *Must I kneel ?* As soon as he spoke  
 I knew him ; and my sudden Thoughts were  
 veritable ; *I hope this Man is now convinced of his*  
*sinful Errors....* but I quickly found my self mi-  
 staken,

staken, for when I came to the Words, *Drink this* those  
 he said, *So I will, if it be good*; and clapt his Hand of Ch  
 upon the Cup, carrying it hastily to his Mouth you ca  
 and would have drank it all, but that I put m ng of  
 Hand upon the Cup, and took it away. Men.  
 star'd, look'd like one amaz'd and confounded le and  
 and had I heard his Words before he got hold of Sac  
 the Cup, I should not have given it him. Men:  
 Wickedness struck me with horror. I administred ther  
 to the rest of the Congregation, who were fudicate  
 priz'd at his bold Impiety; and many of the us W  
 said, *Surely Mr. Edwards is distracted*. When the dare  
 Communion was over, he went down to the Be sacr  
 fry, and then came up to the Chancel again; and uld th  
 seeing two Books lying upon the Communion ter'd  
 Rails, he took them away with him, and as went a  
 went home, he threw them into an Hedge, bled, i  
 afterward he gave them to the Owner, who say y he  
 to him, *Mr. Edwards, I believe if it had been C....*  
*piece of the Plate, you would have taken it*; He said t into  
*Yes, if it had, it must have gone then*. His Wife e his  
 and he had now parted Beds, upon account of b sorry  
 having the *Foul Disease*, as I heard afterward; and s I b  
 she being a constant Communicant, this was b migh  
 him an intended Contempt of our Devotions. who a  
 was resolved to go to him, and ask him the re er an  
 son of his Impudent Prophanation of the Lord religi  
*Supper*; and accordingly I went to his House t sorry  
 next Day, and he was not at home, but the D make h  
 after, I went and found him; and being com then  
 into his Parlour, I said, *Mr. Edwards, what w ds, y*  
*the reason of your coming in that irreverent mann veral*  
*to the Communion?* He said, *He thought a pines*  
*body might come*. No, said I, *none ought to com ed,*

those that come with the Humility and Devotion  
 of Christians. Let me never see you there again,  
 you can come so. And you, whether you believe any  
 of Religion or no, you ought to have some regard  
 to Mankind. Common Civility is a Duty, and it was a most  
 vile and wicked thing thus to affront what we account  
 Sacred. You may be punished by the Laws of  
 Man: But whether you believe or no, assure your  
 self, there is a most just and terrible GOD, who will  
 vindicate his own Honour, and not suffer such enor-  
 mous Wickedness to go unpunish'd. Who are you  
 that dare thus affront Religion in the most solemn  
 sacred Part of it? What are you, that you  
 should thus defy the Lord of Heaven and Earth? He  
 was inter'd and blush'd, and seem'd disorder'd; but  
 went away, and stay'd for no Answer; for I in-  
 vited, if I could, to awaken him: And accord-  
 ingly he came to me that same Evening, with  
 been C.... and desir'd to speak with me. We  
 He sat into the Garden; and he began to acknow-  
 ledge his Fault, that he had done very ill, and  
 was sorry for it, and desir'd it might be pass'd by.  
 I believe he did chiefly, because I told him,  
 he might be punish'd by the Laws of Man. And  
 I am, and always was for using the most  
 tender and gentle Methods, especially in Matters  
 of Religion, told him, I was very glad to hear he  
 was sorry for that grievous Sin, and pray'd GOD  
 to make him more and more sensible of it. I said to  
 him then, as we walked in the Garden, Mr. Ed-  
 wards, you know you and I have heretofore discours'd  
 upon several things of great Consequence to your eternal  
 happiness; and when I saw you at the Communion,  
 to comfort, at first, you had been convinced of the Fal-  
 sity

fity and Impiety of your Opinions, and had come thi-  
 ther as a Penitent ; but I am afraid you are in the  
 same still. Have you any other Reasons of your Un-  
 belief, beside what you then mentioned ? If you have  
 let us hear them. Then he held a long rambling  
 Discourse upon the former Subjects, the Being of  
 GOD, the Truth of Scripture..... At length  
 said, You and I may talk here a great while, to little  
 purpose : Will you be so fair as to write down your  
 Objections against these Truths, with the Opinions  
 you hold, and your Reasons for them ; and I will en-  
 deavour to return a satisfactory Answer. He pro-  
 mised me he would ; and so we parted. Then  
 said to Mr. C... who had walked with us all the  
 time ; You see how this Man abuses his Reason,  
 stands out against Light and Truth, and has been  
 guilty of the most horrid Profanation of Religion :  
 I am afraid GOD will give him up to desperate  
 Courses, or send some heavy Judgment upon him. He  
 said, That might justly be fear'd, for he was  
 it was a design'd Affront upon our most Solemn Sa-  
 vice. This was enough to make any good Chri-  
 stian tremble to think of his State. However  
 upon Munday-night following, which was Sep-  
 the 9th, 1700, Mr. Edwards brought me the fol-  
 lowing Paper, written with his own Hand, and  
 which I have still lying by me,

### Of the Being, or not Being of GOD

**T**HE Being of GOD, you say, is, and has  
 been acknowledged by all Ages and Nations ;  
 hath likewise been denied by particular Persons,



publick Societies and Nations in most Ages ; so there  
 no Universal Consent, because denied by several  
 Nations, as many Historians report of the Cannibals  
 in America, and of Soldania in Africk ; and ma-  
 ny great Philosophers, as Diagoras, Theodorus, and  
 others. Further, if Universal be granted, and e-  
 nough to prove a Deity, and Existence of G O D, it  
 may also prove Polytheism, and Idolatry, for which,  
 the Consent may be pleaded. Many take up their  
 belief of G O D, and the Creation, as part of their  
 education and Notion, more than any Conviction in  
 their Minds and Consciences ; and without being Cen-  
 sorious or Uncharitable, it may be said of most Part  
 of Mankind, witness the daily Enormities and Ex-  
 cesses among Men pretending to Religion, which  
 so take off the Force of Universal Consent, it be-  
 comes in the Tongue only, and not in the Heart. This  
 belief may be introduced thro' Ignorance,  
 as a great Philosopher observes in his Var. Hist.  
 some, the Illiterate believe more than 2. 31.  
 the Philosophers ; or thro' Policy, Fear,  
 Interest, and such like. We find many Persons well  
 disposed to Justice and Goodness, Love and Mercy,  
 chiefly by the Nobleness of their Nature, with the help  
 of Education, and but small Friends to Religion ;  
 when others, by all the Care and Education that may  
 be, for all the Fear they pretend of G O D, and fu-  
 re Punishments are not able to restrain them from  
 the worst of Actions. Why should not this Almighty  
 God manifest himself to us by Miracles ? Did he not  
 for so long time would produce many Contradictions  
 and Disputes, and question his Being ? Supposing  
 that the World that governs the World, and is sup-  
 ported from that great Orb of Nature, this Power  
 had



had never more need to appear than now in Vindication of himself, when Men question his very Being. His Worship is become the Fancy of most Men's Brain; as Luther in his Book, de potestate Papae teaches 7 Sacraments; de captivate Babylonians that there are only 3, and in his Book ad Waldenses but 2. Also, sometimes having owned Purgatory, and since deny'd it, and Transubstantiation, and after deny'd it: To be brief, there are almost Three-score such Contradictions in this Author, and as many in Beza and Calvin, the first and great Lights of the Reformation. If I have a Soul to save, to which of these must I go? Zuinglius presents me with a Volume called The Word of Life; Luther says he is a Fool, Antichrist, and Deceiver; much to the same purpose says Calvin, Beza, and Castellio, of another; what will be the product, I pray you judge.

## Of the Eternity of the World.

From the natural Prospect of Things, the Sun and Moon keep their constant Courses as ever, without decay or diminution. There is also a fresh and flourishing Continuance or Existence of all natural Things. Besides the Judgment of several eminent and ancient Philosophers, as Aristotle, saith, The World was Eternal, and a necessary Emanation from GOD, as Light from the Sun: Epicurus says That by Coalition of Atoms, it came into the World; which is a later Edition than Eternity (which I believe not; ) others, That the World always was, and is of it self existing; and why not, as well as the Author? The Account the Chaldeans give, is 43000 Years from the Creation, to the time

*Vindicta of Alexander. You say, The Improvement of  
Being Arts evince the World's Beginning; which might  
Men come in and go out as occasion, the Fashion of Times,  
Papa and Humour of People; as these last twelve Years  
lonically declare, and make good Solomon's Saying, There  
denies no new thing under the Sun. I wonder so Wise  
ry, and Being, did not make the World from Eternity, or  
d after the Caldeans Account, and manifest his  
rees of glory and Praise in so great a Work, which he him-  
many self saw very Good.*

*Of the Origination, or Eternity of Man.*

*If all Men were Sons of Adam, whence came so  
many different Sorts of People, especially as to produce  
of black Men? If a married Woman here should bring  
u forth such a Child, let her Reputation be as clear as  
day be, what would the World say, or to what Cause  
d. ascribe it, judge ye. If there were no Men, Arts,  
Trade before, or in the beginning with Adam,  
Sun and with what Utensils or Implements did he and Abel  
about till the Ground? We read of none while Tubal-  
and flux in, an Artificer in Brass and Iron; which make  
nature probable, that Men were from all Eternity, with  
eminence the World, as several Authors have observ'd. The  
b, The complaint of Cain, supposeth popularity of People,  
anation that every one finding him should kill him; his tak-  
picuring a Wife; where should he have her? We read of  
to the more Children of Adam, especially Daughters, a  
Eternity great while. And that Cain should build a City with so  
e World little help, and for so few Inhabitants, is to me strange.  
why not Sir, Tho' I have mentioned Probabilities, and the  
caldean judgment of several Authors in these Matters, I  
the time think the thing you desired, was an Account of my Be-  
lief,*

lief, which is, That the *World* is eternal, and of  
 Matter, existing without any more Power than Mat-  
 ter and Motion; and that all Men go to their  
 Mother the *Earth*, and there end. Whatsoever  
 some may say of Transmigration of Souls, no doubt  
 it was the Judgment or Belief of those who ask'd our  
 Saviour, Who did sin, this Man or his Parents  
 that he was born blind? This Question must sup-  
 pose the Soul to have existence, and capable of con-  
 tracting Guilt, before the coming into this Body, else  
 a Man could not sin before born; this was the Opin-  
 ion of the Pythagoreans, and of some among the  
 Jews, but no more of that. I shall therefore beg your  
 Pardon for all Offences past, and any in these presents  
 and give you many Thanks for all your Kindness to  
 me, tho' provoked to the contrary, and hope to receive  
 that satisfaction from you, as may, thro' Mercy of the  
 Almighty you profess, bring me to that Peace and  
 Comfort I believe you to enjoy here, and may to  
 Eternity hereafter; which all the Power of Heaven  
 and Earth grant, if it be but for the Happiness of  
 such Professors, and for the Commodity of the *World*.  
 Assure yourself, it shall be received into an unprejudiced  
 and honest Mind, and condescending and obedient Will.

Your humble Servant, well known; therefore  
 I say no more, nor set my Name.

To this I return'd him the following Answer  
 Sept. the 18th, 1700, wherein my Business was  
 not to expose any thing he had written, nor di-  
 rectly to prove the great Things that were in ques-  
 tion between us, but only to answer his Objec-  
 tions; to treat him with all Tenderness and Plain-  
 ness, and give Satisfaction if I could.

S I R,

OUR Paper contains several Things concerning the Being of GOD; the Eternity of the World, and of Men upon the Earth; to which I shall return a plain Answer, and that after your own Method, cause, perhaps, it may be the best way to give you satisfaction. I said, The Consent of all Nations, all Ages, was one good Argument of the Being GOD. For this has always been the general Opinion of all Mankind. And I never yet read or heard of any whole Nation, State or Society, that deny'd a Supreme Being. Thus Tully, the greatest Philosopher among the Romans, and who lived about Years before Christ, says, There was no Nation barbarous, but that they owned a GOD. As for those ancient Philosophers, or particular Persons, which are said to have been Atheists, they were very few in number, of small Reputation for Learning, and their Authority is of no weight in respect of that of the best and wisest, and most learned of all Ages. Besides, some are said to have been Atheists, because they deny'd a Supreme Being, but because they deny'd the Divinity of those Idols which were worshipped by the common People. And then, if they were really Atheists, is the Testimony of 6 or 7 Atheists (for you will hardly find more in ancient History) of more moment than the Testimony of all the World beside? Or is it just to hearken to one or three, Vicious and Sceptical Persons, rather than to the most Virtuous and Honest, and even all the rest of Mankind? I must declare unto you, that I never read of, nor met with any Man that was so irreverently Just, Honest, Chast and Sober, who deny'd the

S I R



*the Being of GOD. Bring me a Wise and Good Man, who leads a Virtuous, Upright and Regular Life, and who has kept himself from the Vices and Pollutions of the Ages, who denies a Supreme Being, and his Testimony deserves to be consider'd. As for the Cannibals you mention, or the People of Soldania, who are said to own no GOD; neither is it said that they deny him: For they are a savage, wild, uncivilized People; and as they are few, and bear no proportion to the rest of the World; so it is very unreasonable to judge of the Sense of Mankind, by the Opinion of those who are so rude and ignorant. And then you should consider, that this Argument for the Being of a GOD, from the Universal Consent of Mankind, is not weaken'd by this, because now and then in an Age, some odd Person may question his Being, or because a few Cannibals, or some barbarous People upon the Coast of Africa, do not own his Being; but if all civiliz'd Nations, if infinitely the greater Part of Mankind, if the best and wisest and virtuous, and most rational in all Ages have always acknowledged a GOD, this is sufficient to shew a Universal Consent. Thus it may be said to be a Universal Truth, That Men are born with one Head, tho' there may have been Monsters born with two. And perhaps if it could be traced exactly, the number of real Atheists is not greater than the number of such Monsters. When you say That Universal Consent, if it was granted, might prove Polytheism; this I deny. There never was any such Universal Consent for Polytheism; for tho' some Nations worshipped many Gods, yet these were of an inferior Order; they did generally, especially the Philosophers, own One Supreme over all, whom they called the best and greatest Being; the King and Father of Gods and Men.*



As for what you say of many Peoples taking up  
 their Belief of a GOD and the Creation, by Edu-  
 cation, and not by Examination and Conviction, I  
 grant it may be so ; but I say also, That the Belief  
 of a GOD, and Maker of all Things, is a Truth so  
 plain to the generality of Men, that they readily as-  
 sent to it ; and a little Consideration of the Works of  
 Nature, and of their own Frame, will convince them  
 of it. But I wish that all would consider the Grounds  
 of their Belief more than they do, that so they might  
 be able to give a Reason of the Hope that is in  
 them. And I would desire you to consider, that there  
 are very many who do examine the Reasons of these  
 things. And you may observe, That when the acutest  
 and most learned Men have made the deepest Search  
 into Philosophy and Divinity, there is not One in a  
 thousand but declare themselves satisfy'd in the Be-  
 lief of a GOD, and the Truth of Religion.  
 When you say, The Belief of GOD might be in-  
 duc'd thro' Ignorance ; this is altogether unlikely,  
 since none but the most Savage and Ignorant People  
 have made the Instances of those that disown his Being.  
 The more civiliz'd any People are, and the greater de-  
 grees of Knowledge they have, they are still more con-  
 vinced of the Being of GOD, and a Providence, and  
 have juster Notions about them; You say, That a  
 Philosopher observed, That the Illiterate believe more  
 in the Philosophers ; and quote Var. Hist. 2. 31.  
 He does not say they believe more, but, that they  
 believe better than the Philosophers. And if you  
 had read that Chapter, you would have found a good  
 Testimony for the Universal Consent of Mankind, in  
 the Belief of a GOD and Providence ; that no Nation,  
 then

then known, questioned the Belief of these, before 2 or 3 Pretenders to Philosophy among the Greeks.

The Belief of a GOD, could not be the Device of Politicians, since this Belief, as I have shew'd, was always granted, and no Time can be named when it was not; and since the greatest Politicians could never free themselves from this Belief, but have been in as much Apprehension of the Power of GOD, as any others, as is manifest in the Example of Tiberius, &c.

But how could Fear or Interest propagate the Belief of such a Being? How came all Mankind to be possess'd with the same Fear, excepting a Few of the worst and most ignorant People? Indeed, all that believe in GOD ought to fear him; but 'tis not their Fear which cause the Belief of his Being; but the right use of their Reason, and the due Consideration of his Works. Nor could the Belief of such a Being proceed from Interest; seeing 'tis the Interest of all the Wicked, that there should be no such Thing; and yet they cannot put off the Belief of such a Being. As for the Virtuous and Pious, they confess they must renounce all worldly Interest, rather than offend GOD, and therefore 'tis not merely their temporal Interest that makes them believe in him. You say, There are many Persons, no Friends to Religion, of Noble and Generous Dispositions, well disposed to Justice, Goodness and Mercy. Granting this; as the natural Inclinations of some are better than others, I do not see how this makes against the Being of GOD, or the Truth of Religion: And I do not question but these Persons would be much better than they are, if they believed the One, and were true Friends to the Other. Neither do I think that the bare Generosity of their Tempers, would restrain them from acting contrary to Justice and Goodness.

if their Passions, Pleasures, Lust, or Interest required it, and they could with safety gratifie them.

As to what you say of the great Enormities and Irregularities of the greatest Part of those who pretend to Religion; that good Education, and the Fear of future Punishments, do not keep them from the worst of Actions. You must not infer from hence, that all these People are Hypocrites, and believe nothing of a GOD; or that Religion has no Efficacy upon Peoples Minds: All that follows from hence is this, That Men may sin against their Knowledge, and act contrary to their Profession, and therefore they are exceedingly to blame, and Self-condemn'd: And this is visible to every Day's Experience; for Men have free Will, and very often do contrary to what they know they should do. For all Men do not govern themselves according to those speculative Truths which they own, nor live according to the Principles which they profess to believe; but they are led by their Appetites and Interests, their Lusts and Passions, their Pleasures and Humours, against the clear Sense of their Understanding, to commit that, for some present Delight or Advantage, which they know will ruin or undo them. You may as well argue, That High-way-men and House-breakers in England, believe there are no capital Punishments for Theft and Burglary, since they commit these Crimes every Day, tho they know the Laws against them, and even see Men executed for them every Month.

As to that bold Question, Why GOD does not discover himself by Miracles, and vindicate his Power upon such as deny his Being? I answer, I do not find that there was ever any Miracle wrought to convince an Atheist; because the right use of our na-

tural Reason will lead us to the Knowledge of the Supreme Being ; and GOD will take his own time to vindicate his Power and Majesty. Vengeance will come soon enough. The Impieties and Blasphemies of Atheists hurt not GOD. He affords them Means, and spares them, that they may be inexcusable. In the mean time, he has them all in safe Custody ; he will certainly call them to account for the abuse of those Means, Parts and Talents with which he had entrusted them, and reward them according to their Works. But GOD has not left himself without Witness ; he has made divers Revelations of his Power and Goodness, and wrought abundance of Miracles, which are delivered to us with all the Marks of Truth and Certainty that such Matters are capable of ; and if Men will not believe these Things, which come with such Evidence as can never be disproved, they must continue in their Unbelief, and answer to GOD at the last. It does not become his Majesty and Wisdom, to work Miracles when every Atheist calls for them.

As to what I have said concerning the Differences between Luther, Calvin, and others of the first Reformers, I believe you had it out of some popish Books, where the Papists doing all they can to aggravate the Differences that were among them. The Reformation went on by degrees, and they might say some things at first which afterwards they saw cause to alter. But this makes nothing against us, for we owe our Reformation neither to Luther nor Calvin ; nor does it make anything against the Truth and Certainty of the Protestant Religion ; for they all agreed in making the Holy Scripture the Rule of their Faith and Worship. And if you were able to compare the Harmony of the

Confession



the *Confessions of Faith in all the Protestant Churches*,  
 to win would find the things they differ in to be very in-  
 all considerable, and such as in no wise touch the Founda-  
 of Atheism of Christianity. You say, God's Worship is be-  
 as, and the Fancy of every One's Brains. I grant  
 In there are many Giddy and Enthusiastical People, who  
 he will be led away with their own Delusions and Whimsies;  
 of those the establish'd Worship among us is Solemn and  
 had singular, and agreeable to the Word of GOD.  
 to them You argue, That the World is Eternal, because  
 without the Sun and Moon keep their constant Courses,  
 of which and that there is a fresh and flourishing Continuance  
 of all natural things. But if you would seriously re-  
 e Mark it upon it, this does not prove the Eternity of the  
 capable World, but rather the contrary; for where there is  
 e, which has a Succession of Day and Night, of Months and  
 disproves years, of Summer and Winter, Spring and Fall, Births  
 answer and Deaths of Men, and other living Creatures.....  
 Majesty these obvious Vicissitudes, do plainly manifest, that all  
 Atheism these must have a Beginning, and were once put in  
 these Courses, and therefore cannot be Eternal. All  
 nces be Famous Philosophers before Aristotle, held, That  
 e Reform the World was made, and his Authority is of no va-  
 h Book, when he departs from that general Tradition,  
 e Difference which was handed down from the beginning, is so  
 ion were agreeable to Reason, and confirmed by Holy Scripture.  
 at first say The World might be Eternal by Emanation  
 But then from GOD, as Light from the Sun, is to beg  
 formation the thing in question; it makes GOD not to be a free,  
 make and a necessary Agent, and contains many other Ab-  
 e Protegencies. Epicurus's Opinion, of the World's being  
 king made by the accidental meeting together of Atoms,  
 Worship most ridiculous Folly and Nonsense, which also you  
 ay of it approve your self. It signifies little what others  
 onfession assert

assert of the *World's* existing always, unless they be  
*Reasons* for their *Affertions*. And there is abundance  
 more reason to believe rather, that the *Author*  
 did exist from *Eternity*. It is far more rational  
 to believe, That a Being of infinite Power, Wisdom  
 and Goodness, did always exist, and make all things  
 according to his own Will and Pleasure ; than  
 fancy that these visible Things, which are subject  
 to Alteration and Change every Hour, did exist from  
 eternity. Tho' the Chaldeans reckon'd 43000 Years  
 to the time of Alexander ; yet this doth not argue  
 the *World* to be any older than the *Scripture* makes  
 much less that it is *Eternal*. For they owned it  
 a Beginning ; and they counted Months for Years  
 and this will bring it pretty near the *Scripture*  
 count ; but all Heathen Chronology is extremely  
 uncertain.

I said, The late Invention of Arts and Sciences  
 and the newness and small compass of History,  
 the little Account we have of Times past, is a  
 good Argument to shew that the *World* is not  
 eternal. For tho' some curious Arts perhaps might be  
 and go out of Fashion, yet the most necessary and  
 useful to human Life could not possibly do so ; and  
 are but of late date. And if the *World* had been  
 eternal, how is it possible that all Records and Chronology  
 of Times and Actions should not extend to above  
 3000 Years past ? For there is no Book, except the Bible  
 that is of that Antiquity. The gradual increase  
 spreading of Mankind upon the Earth, and the  
 account that we have of the Origin of Nations, and  
 planting of particular Countries, so agreeable to the  
 person of the Sons of Noah, set down in *Scripture*  
 shew that they came all from the same Stock, as  
 inf

they bring us. It does not become us to ask why GOD  
 not make the World from Eternity? or why it  
 made but about 6000 Years ago? For GOD is  
 the Agent, of infinite Perfections; 'tis meet we  
 should leave him to act as he pleases; he knows how  
 to manifest his own Praise and Glory without our Ad-  
 miration; And seeing GOD is from Eternity, when ever  
 the World had been made, tho' it had been a Million  
 Years before the Chaldeans Account, the same Que-  
 stion might still have been ask'd, why it was made no  
 other way?

tho' there are many different Sorts of People, in  
 different Dispositions and outward Colour, yet they might  
 all have proceeded all from one Father at first. For  
 in a days, if a Man has many Children, their  
 Complexions are often very different, and some are big,  
 some are little; some have black, some white, some  
 red Hair, and yet all Children of the same Man and  
 of the same Blood. As for the Black, 'tis likely their Colour  
 proceeds from their Climate, living under, or near  
 the Equinoctial Line, in excessive Heat, which in time may change  
 their Skin to that Colour; and if they live long in cold  
 Countries, they turn Tawny, and perhaps, in some  
 Generations, would be White.

In the Beginning the Earth was exceeding Fruitful  
 and brought forth plentifully with little Labour; and  
 when Men were few, they had need but of few Uten-  
 sils or Tools to Till it; but these were after found out  
 by Degrees, as other Things were, which did not come  
 into the Perfection they now are in, for many Ages.  
 It is plain the World was not Eternal, by what  
 the Scripture says of Tubal-cain's being an Artificer in Brass  
 and Iron; for if it had, the use of those Metals  
 would have been found out long before his Days.

The

The Scripture does not relate every thing; Adam had many more Children, Sons and Daughters, whose Names are not mention'd. Then Brothers and Sisters might marry; and there might be a considerable Number of People upon the Earth when Cain killed his Brother, for then the World was about 128 Years old; Seth, which Eve said was given her instead of Adam, was born in the 130 Year of Adam's Life. And we must consider, that 'tis not said, that Cain built a City presently; but, he went into the Land of Nod, and living, as Men did then, 8 or 9 hundred Years, he might in that time have Descendents enow to enable him build a City, and to furnish it with Inhabitants.

Thus having consider'd all Things, I think, that 'tis material in your Paper, I come to that which I was most desirous to know, what was your own Belief; For among these probabilities, as you call them, which you have mentioned from other Authors, you might, I am sure, find in some of the Books you have read, have found sufficient Answers to them. But your own Belief, you tell me is this; which yet is founded upon these Probabilities; That the World is Eternal, and of Matter existing without any more Power than Matter and its Motions; and that all Men go to their Mother in the Earth, and there end: So that if this be your Confession of your Faith, you believe no GOD, no Supreme or Spiritual Being, no Providence, no Angels, no Spirit, no Divine Revelation or Scriptures, no Immortality of the Soul, no Resurrection or Judgment, no Life after this. Now unless you can overthrow the Arguments we bring to establish all these Articles, or have stronger Reasons to believe the contrary, which I am sure you have not, your Belief is very rash, and ill becoming a reasonable Man. And what a miserable



g; Ad the State have you argued your self into, by seeking to  
 ers, w wise above others ! How have you levelled your self  
 and Siff th the Beasts that perish ! You that know so many  
 able Na ings in the World, and will not know the Lord your  
 ed his B aker ! What absurd and incredible things do you  
 rs old; ieve, and yet will not believe a GOD ! You believe  
 d of A World to be Eternal; yet this can never be proved ;  
 And re is not the tenth part of that Evidence for it,  
 built t there is for the Being of GOD ; and the genera-  
 d of N of Mankind, the best and wisest of Men in all  
 red Ye es, have believed that it was created ; and the  
 v to b st learned and acute Persons at this Day do look  
 habitan m the Eternity of the World to be impossible. You  
 , that ieve all was done by Matter and Motion ; without  
 I was m Supreme Being, or Infinite Understanding to guide  
 For as d order all Things ; is not this as absurd, as to be-  
 you be ve Epicurus his coalition of Atoms ? 'tis not so ridi-  
 am su ous to believe, that you can take a Bag full of Let-  
 und su s, shake them together, and throw them out, and  
 f, you t they shall all fall into that order, as to compose  
 Probab is first Chapter of Genesis, as 'tis to believe that this  
 f Matte st and regular, and beautiful Frame of the World,  
 atter an th its successive Changes, and all the various Crea-  
 Moth es therein, did exist from Eternity, or was made  
 is be Matter and Motion, without any All-wise Mind to  
 O, no S ect and dispose of them. You cannot deny but there  
 o Angel e such things as Life, Sense, Reason and Knowledge ;  
 o Imma ise Order in the World, and a curious Contrivance  
 ment, n the subserviency of one thing to another, for divers  
 overthro mirable Ends and Purposes ; and yet you believe that  
 Article is is all produced and managed by Matter and  
 y, whic otion, which have neither Life, nor Sense, nor Rea-  
 ash, an s in them. You may as well believe that the Timber,  
 a mis tricks, Mortar, Glass, and other Materials of your  
 ab

own House, being put into motion by a Wind, did of themselves meet into such a convenient Habitation, without the Contrivance of any Workman, as to believe that this wonderful Fabrick of the Universe, in which there appears so much excellent Wisdom and Power, Goodness and Foresight, came into that State it is without a GOD. As to what you say of Transmigration of Souls; it was the Opinion of some Philosophers, and it may be some of the Jews also; but then they did not believe the Souls of Men to have been Eternal; they acknowledg'd, that they, and all things else, were made by GOD. But the Grounds of this Opinion are very weak; and it may be, some Truth, imperfectly deliver'd by Tradition, or misunderstood, might give occasion to it. But how can you talk of Transmigration of Souls, who believe that there is nothing in the World but Matter and Motion? But I have not leisure to pursue these Things, or represent unto you all the incredible Absurdities which follow from your Belief, and which you must believe, if you believe any thing. I shall rather exhort you to reflect seriously upon the Part you have taken, and the Choice you have made. You have rejected all that Reason and Evidence that there is for the Being of GOD, and a future State, which is and always has been, the common and universal Opinion of all Mankind, excepting a very few inconsiderable Persons; and upon slight Arguments, and meer Conjectures, you believe, That the World is Eternal; that there is nothing but Matter and Motion, and that all Men go to the Earth, and there end. Ought you not, in Prudence, to chuse the Side which has the strongest Arguments, and clearest Evidence? What tho' you can raise some Objections against the Being of GOD, and Religion; are they

did of not more Objections, more Difficulties, and infinitely  
 more Absurdities in your Opinion, who own no GOD,  
 and no Religion? Beside, unless you could overthrow  
 the convincing Reasons, I may say Demonstrations,  
 that we have of the Being of GOD, and of the Truth of  
 Christian Religion, your little Cavils and Objections  
 against them, supposing they could not be answer'd,  
 signify nothing: But they are far from being unanswer-  
 able; for there have such Answers been given to all the  
 Objections and Difficulties of Atheists and Misbeliev-  
 ers, as may satisfy all unprejudiced and reasonable Men.  
 I desire you to deal impartially in this, as being a Mat-  
 ter of the greatest moment: And in your reading Books,  
 do not only gather Objections, but mind the Answers  
 given to them; do not stand out against Light and  
 Conviction: We have all the Evidence for the Being  
 of GOD, and Truth of our Religion, that things of this  
 Nature are capable of. Consider, 'tis far more likely  
 that you should be deceived, than infinitely the greatest  
 part of Mankind; than the most Wise, and Learned,  
 and Virtuous Men of all Ages; than such as Judge  
 Sales, whose Life, and Learning, and Piety, you  
 have nothing to say against. After the deepest Search,  
 and strictest Enquiry into Things, these Men have re-  
 suted the Cavils of Atheists, sat down in the firm Be-  
 lief of GOD, and the Truth of our Religion, and by the  
 eminent Justice and Piety of their Lives, shew'd the  
 steadfast Hopes they had of the Blessings of the World to  
 come. They were as unwilling to be deceived as you, and  
 abundantly more able to find out the Truth. I am per-  
 suaded, your own Thoughts and Conscience do sometimes  
 tell you, that there may be a GOD, and a Life to come,  
 whatever you imagine to the contrary; and then what  
 will become of you, who reject the plainest Arguments;

to prove the Being of GOD, and upon the slightest Grounds believe there is none? The ingenious Expressions you have in the latter end of your Paper, make me believe you will consider these things better than you have done. You promise to receive what I send with an unprejudiced and honest Mind, and with a condescending and obedient Will; I desire nothing beside such a Disposition and Temper, but the Blessings of GOD upon what I have written, and then I do not doubt but you will find some Satisfaction, which is the only Design and earnest Prayer of him that is your ready Friend to serve you in all Christian Offices,

JOHN SMITH.

The Reader will please to excuse the repeating some things in these Letters, which had pass'd before between us in our private Conferences, they being never intended for the Publick; nor had they appeared now, had not his miserable End given occasion to produce them, that he might be the better set forth as an Example to the World. I never received any Answer from him to this Letter, nor did I discourse with him any more about his Opinions: But now I understood that his Life was not near so regular as before I thought it was. I found he was given to lewd and vicious Courses. Though he had a comely, pleasing and most virtuous Wife of his own, yet he kept company with base Women, and had gotten the *foul Disease*. And I think it was not long after this that he was questioned before the Honourable Sir N. G. upon account of a naughty Woman, who was seen to go into his House one Sunday, when all his Family but him-



slighted. Her Friends prosecuted him before the Ju-  
 ge, as if he had murder'd her and hid her; and  
 had a Warrant to search, but found nothing. Some  
 said it was a Trick to get a Piece of Money from  
 him: And he brought Witnesses to swear they had  
 seen her after that Sunday; but notwithstanding  
 that, I cannot find that the Woman has ever yet  
 been seen since or heard of. But however that Mat-  
 ter is, tho' I did not speak with him, I enquired  
 after him, how he behaved himself; he did come  
 now and then to Church, but rather more seldom  
 than formerly; going on in his Infidelity and Im-  
 penitence, and giving himself more to Drinking  
 than he used to do. When he was in his Drink,  
 he was like a mad Man, and when he was out of  
 it, would be silent and mindless, like one falling  
 into Despair. During this time, and all along, his  
 Relations were not wanting to do what they could  
 for his Conversion; and about the end of April,  
 1702, his pious Wife, who was always full of Con-  
 cern to recover him, brought me the Copy of a Let-  
 ter, which he had written to a Brother in law,  
 wherein he did in a very handsome manner own him-  
 self satisfy'd in the Being of a GOD, and the Truth  
 of Christian Religion.... and said, *She was afraid of*  
*his falling into Desperation*; whereupon I wrote  
 unto him the following Letter, May the 6th. 1702.

S I R,

Have heard nothing from you since I wrote unto you  
 above a Year ago. But I happen'd lately to see a  
 Letter, which you wrote to your Brother, wherein you  
 own the Being of GOD, Providence, another Life of  
 Rewards

Rewards and Punishments, and seem to believe in our Saviour Jesus Christ. These were the great Things against which you raised your Objections; and seeing you are satisfy'd in these, what remains, but that you should heartily conform your self accordingly; repent sincerely of all that is past, and be as zealous to promote the Fear of GOD, and Honour of Religion, both in your Words and Actions, as ever you were to oppose or deride them? But I observe in that Letter, that you blame your self, because your Faith is not free and voluntary, but in a manner forced from you; and seem to have such Apprehensions of your former doings, of your long and obstinate standing out against GOD and Christ, as you be almost overwhelm'd with Despair. Now the occasion of my present Writing, is, to do what I may to prevent your falling into that deplorable State: For this is that which the Enemy of your Soul seeks to drive you into; and which you must by all means labour to avoid. He first stirr'd you up to be an Enemy against GOD, and now he will perswade you that GOD will never be reconciled to you. Indeed, I would advise you to view your past Sin with all its aggravating Circumstances, and make your self as sensible of its wicked and hateful Nature as ever you can, for truly it was exceeding great and full of the highest Provocations; wherefore your Sorrow, and Humiliation, and Repentance, if possible, be answerable; but yet let not this cast you into Despair, or make you mistrust the Mercy of GOD. How great soever your Sin has been, the Mercy of GOD is abundantly greater; and if you unfeignedly repent and reform, he will abundantly pardon; for he delights not in the death of a Sinner, but rather that he should turn and live. He is not envious or implacable, but slow to Wrath, and sincerely desirous of your Welfare.

welfare of every one : He would have all Men to be  
 ed. And it is much more grateful to him to be  
 rified in your Salvation, than by your Condemnation.  
 therefore do not let Satan get advantage over you, and  
 ; repent you to Desperation; but repent and humble your self  
 for all that is past ; bless GOD that has given  
 a sight of your Error, and beg his Grace continually,  
 that you may perfect your Repentance, become a new  
 man in Heart and Life, and by your exemplariness  
 all Virtue and Sobriety, Righteousness and Devotion,  
 as great a Means to reclaim others from Irreligion  
 and Impiety, as you formerly were to encourage them  
 therein. What Praise and Thanks do you owe to Al-  
 mighty GOD, who bore with you so long, and did not  
 you off in your Unbelief and Stubbornness against  
 Him ! His former Lenity and Forbearance is a Demon-  
 stration that he desires you should be saved. If he had  
 your Damnation, would he have suffer'd you to  
 be so long to blaspheme and defy him ? Let Reflecti-  
 on upon this wonderful Patience and Forbearance melt  
 you into that Godly Sorrow which accompanies Salva-  
 tion ; and excite you to glorifie GOD, and acknowledge  
 his Favours by your exemplary Obedience thro' all the  
 of your Life. This is the earnest Prayer of yours,  
 JOHN SMITH.

He sent me no Answer to this ; neither did he  
 come to speak with me, as I thought he might do,  
 and am perswaded he would have done, had there  
 been any serious Care of his Soul, due Abhorrence  
 of his Sin against GOD, or the Seeds of true Re-  
 pentance in him. But he went on in his worldly  
 concerns, sometimes with very great application,  
 and at sometimes acting oddly and unaccountably,  
 as if he were not right in his Senses, and sometimes  
 Welfar

as negligently as if he did not care which End were foremost. Still getting more frequently in Drink than he used to do. By this means his Affairs ran Backwards; his Estate was encumber'd with Mortgages, and other Debts, and he undertook and grasped at more than he was able to mannage. This made him uneasy in his Affairs; beside the great Trouble and Horror of Mind, which was sometimes very visible upon his Countenance; for there could not chuse but be terrible Struggles and Agonies within him, which were the Fruits of his Infidelity, Impiety and Wickedness, with the guilty Remorses of a condemning Conscience; the sore Lashes of a wounded Spirit. He had most obstinately vilify'd and abused the Grace of GOD, and that was now departing from him. Yet he had his quiet and lucid Intervals. And at some times he would be very free, open, and ingenuous in his Discourse; but at other times, close and down-look'd as if he intended to do one a mischief. In his Discourse he has sometimes been heard to say, *An Atheist! I do not believe there is really any such Person for there is no Man of Sense, who considers things, but must acknowledge a Deity.* By this it should seem that his Understanding was convinced, but his Heart was not reform'd; his Will was not subdu'd; his Mind was not won to lay hold of the Promise or to fly to a Saviour; he was only come into that fearful Condition the Apostle St. James mentions *to believe and tremble*, which is a most horrible State. For he had not the Grace of saving Faith, nor any serious Purpose or Endeavour of seeking the Favour of GOD by a sincere Repentance; nor did he with any Concern apply himself to these Things.

This



This was the lamentable Course of his Life, still growing worse and worse, both in his outward Affairs, and also in the inward State of his Mind. And thus he continued till the beginning of *January* next; when having sat up all *Friday* Night, and staid all Day on *Saturday* at the Ale-house, he kept on *Sunday* in his own House, in his thoughtful Melancholy Postures, as he used to be after he had been drinking; saying little, and looking much disorder'd in his Mind. How he pass'd the *Munday*, know not; but on *Tuesday* Morning following, which was the *Fourth* of *January*, he bid his Wife go to *Bow*, about the Concerns of their Brew-house there; in the mean time he shut himself up in a Chamber, kindled a Fire, and prepared things for his most wicked and unnatural Design upon his own life. When his Wife came home about Noon, she went up to the Chamber-door, and knock'd; after a while, he asked, *Who is there?* She answer'd, *It is I; will you come down to Dinner?* He said, *No; I will not; go down; I cannot eat to Day.* She went down, and after a while sent up the Maid, and bid her look in, if she could, and see what he was doing. The Maid went up, and just as she came to the Door, the Guns went off. He had kept the Door barr'd till now, but having prepar'd all things for his horrid Purpose, he unbarr'd it, just as he went to do his own Execution; which was in this manner: He had a Musket, a Fowling-Piece, and a Scrued-Barrel-Gun; the Muzzels of these he had rais'd upon a Wooden-Horse, and planted two of them to his Head, and one to his Left-Side; and having stript himself to his Shirt and Breeches, he laid himself down close to them, and setting,

F

with

with an hot Iron, fire to a Train of Powder, they went off at once, and murder'd him in a moment. Here was the dreadful and miserable End of his *Atheism* and *Infidelity*, his *Irreligion* and *Impiety*. In this horrible manner did he cut off his Life and Hopes and all at one Blow; and, without any Fear of GOD, or regard to the Good of his own Soul, launch'd out into an unalterable Eternity !

I do not know that any can justly take offence at any thing I have written; I am sure I am far from intending to give offence to any. And here is nothing but Truth; plain Matter of Fact, related without Art or Ornament; and brought into as narrow a Compass as my Leisure would permit. And since Irreligion and Atheism, and all kind of Vice and Prophaneness, are so bold and daring; since the Practice of the generality of Christians is so depraved and licentious, and so disagreeable to their Holy Faith; and since People are so much addicted to the Things of this World, and so unconcern'd for the Things of Eternity: It is the Duty, of Ministers especially, to lay hold of all occasions to expose the Folly and Danger of Infidelity; to confirm their People in the Belief of the Truth; to shew the Necessity of Obedience and Holiness; and to awaken the Stupid and Negligent, by setting before them the fearful Examples of GOD's Judgments upon Atheistical and Ungodly Men. This is the sole Design of the Publication of these Papers, to endeavour to put a Stop to those False and Impious Opinions, which have spread so far among us, and to deter the common Sort of Professors of Christianity from going on in their open Disobedience to the Holy Rules of our Religion. For

these **Practical Atheists** are one of the main Causes, and the principal Support of **Speculative Atheism**; and as they are the more unreasonable and ridiculous of the Two, so their Portion hereafter will be the most intolerable.

I would therefore, in the first Place, apply myself to those who profess Christianity, and yet lead wicked and unchristian Lives. Consider seriously with your selves, how you ruin your own Souls by your vicious and ungodly Practices; consider how your Wickedness occasions the Damnation of others; how you confirm *Atheists* in their Infidelity, and bring a Scandal upon our Holy Religion. For your disobedient and wicked Lives are the shame of the Gospel, and the Bulwork of **Atheism**. 'Tis impossible for you to drive them out of their Fortress. What Arguments can you use to persuade them there is a **G O D**, when you live your selves as if there was none? Say what you can to them, still they will return upon you; *Thou that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?* If you believe there is a **G O D**, why do you deny him in your Works? If you profess the Scripture is his Word, the Rule which he has given you to walk by; why do you despise his Word, and break this Rule every Day? This **Speculative Atheism** is the most absurd and impious Error in the World, yet **Practical Atheism** is far more unreasonable and provoking. You that profess a most pure and heavenly Religion, and yet lead most impure and earthly Lives; what a Dishonour do you do to your **G O D** and Religion! and what irreparable Damage do you do to your own and other Mens Souls! Sure there is none of you that could have had the Heart to have persuaded this

unhappy Man to lay violent Hands upon his Body, or would have helped him to plant his Guns against it, to take away his bodily Life; and yet by your wicked Lives; by your unjust and ungodly Deeds so contrary to your Faith, you have been the chief Means to confirm him in his Atheism and Infidelity, and, in part, the Cause of the Destruction of his Body and Soul to Eternity. 'Twas your ungodly Lives that occasion'd him to deny his GOD! Think what Account you will give to GOD for these things! And while you have Time repent and reform your Lives. Let your Practice be answerable to your Faith; walk worthy of that holy Calling to which you are called, and let your exemplary Sobriety, Righteousness and Piety, be a Proof of the Sincerity of your Faith, and an Ornament to the Gospel. Otherwise, if you continue in your Disobedience, and go on to contradict your Faith by your Practices; to scandalize Religion, and draw your Neighbours to Infidelity; what Advantages or Enjoyments soever you may have in this World; how quietly or pompously soever you may go out of it, assure your selves, you shall have no other Portion in the Life to come, but with Hypocrites, Unbelievers and Atheists. In the mean time, think what fearful Judgments you may expect, and what terrible Calamities you may incense GOD to bring upon the Nation, while you that profess Religion and the Belief of a GOD, dishonour that Religion you profess, and defy that GOD you own, and by your wicked Lives, occasion Atheism, and confirm Men in Infidelity.

I would, in the next Place, address my self to the *Atheists* themselves, if any such should chance



to read these Papers, and conjure them by all that  
 Love and Care which they have for their own Peace  
 and Welfare, that they would, by this sad Exam-  
 ple, beware of vilifying the Holy Scriptures, of  
 abusing Reason and Grace, of standing out against  
 Right and Conviction, and of designing Affronts  
 upon Religion; especially that they would take  
 heed of blaspheming and denying that great and  
 powerful GOD, who has set a Witness for himself  
 in their own Breast, whose Evidence they can ne-  
 ver totally stifle; Who, tho' he is patient and long-  
 suffering, yet has them always in his Hand, will  
 certainly, in due time, vindicate his own Honour,  
 punish and confound them for ever. When the Fu-  
 ry of his Vengeance shall once arise against them,  
 when all their Mirth and Gayety and Prophaneness,  
 shall pass away like Bubbles off the Face of the Wa-  
 ter, and they themselves sink down into everlasting  
 Torments. Alas, your boasted Reason, so vilely  
 now by you perverted, will prove but a broken  
 Reed, when GOD shall blast it, and give you up  
 to Passion and Madness! Do not think that then  
 your Cobweb Arguments against the Being of a  
 GOD, and the Immortality of your own Souls,  
 will yield you any Support, nor fancy that the re-  
 membrance of your little Witticisms, and lewd Jest  
 upon Religion, will give you any Comfort. For  
 all your present Pretences to Knowledge and Rea-  
 son, then you will be convinced that Religion was  
 the highest Reason, and the truest Wisdom, to fear  
 and serve GOD, and that they were the only Fools  
 who said, or lived as if, there was none.

But to turn from these, too usual Scorners of Re-  
 ligion, to them that will give me a more favourable  
 Hearing:

Hearing: I would exhort all Pious and Obedient Christians to persist stedfastly and chearfully in their Duty, notwithstanding the Contradiction of Sinners and the Reproaches of Infidels; that they would be most exemplary in their Lives, and immovable in the Faith of *Christ*, for the Glory of GOD, and for the Honour of our Religion; that they may confirm the Good, and convince the Gainsayers by their eminent Virtue and Piety; and so bring Comfort and Salvation to their own Souls. Do not let the Impious and Prophane laugh you out of the Truth, nor pervert you from the Ways of Righteousness. You are fully perswaded, that all your temporal Concerns are of little or no value, in comparison of your precious and Immortal Spirits, and the Care of securing to your selves Eternal Blessedness. The sure and only Way to do this, is to be learn'd from GOD himself, and can be expected in no other Method than that which he has revealed to us. Wherefore be perswaded to take your Faith and Religion from the Word of GOD, and not from the impious Schemes of ungodly and sensual Men. For things are now come to that pass, that divers Factors for Atheism pretend to support Religion, by undermining the right Apprehensions of GOD, and the Authority of Scripture. I wonder what a late Author means by *Reason and Religion* who pretends to vindicate both, by asserting the Impossibility of conceiving the Existence of any immaterial Substance, and denying the Spirituality of the Soul. Have a Care of such Vindicators of Religion, who use all their Art to dishonour GOD and vilify Man: Seeking to make him material and our own Souls no better than the Beasts. Wh

about to overthrow the clearest Principles of  
 Reason and Divinity hitherto establish'd, and con-  
 tradict the plain Words of Scripture. This Book  
 would rather have been intituled, *The Grand Essay*  
*to root the true Notion of G O D and Religion out*  
*of the World.* At least, had he done fairly, he  
 would have restrain'd it, and call'd it, *A Vindi-*  
*cation of the Reason and Religion of Mr. Hobbs,*  
*Spinosa, and W. C.* It would much better be-  
 come a Gentleman of that Profession, and seems  
 so more to the Level of his Corporeal Genius,  
 to study the Nature of Herbs and Plants, and to  
 find his own Province, the Body, than to meddle  
 with such Subjects, as he says, *are impossible to be*  
*perceived.* Assuredly he will find Work enough  
 in those Things, for his deepest Researches, and  
 it would be far more commendable, to employ  
 his Industry for the Ease and Health of the Body,  
 and herein his Labours might be beneficial to  
 our Fairer Kind. As for this *Essay*, what Pleasure it  
 affords to *Atheists* and *Infidels* is pretty visible;  
 and what Service it can do to Religion, I can no  
 more comprehend, than he can conceive an imma-  
 terial Substance. Is it the Way to vindicate *Reli-*  
*gion*, or serve *Religion*, by attempting to render  
 G O D a Material Being, and thus go about to  
 destroy the Souls of Men, ( which  
 has already endeavour'd to make as mortal  
 as their Bodies ) by venting his Crude and  
 heistical Opinions? But however our Bodies  
 are under his Prescriptions, I hope some skilful  
 and will prepare an Antidote for this so per-  
 nicious one to our Souls.

To

To conclude, I would desire all Sorts of People to consider in the miserable End of this Man, the just and heavy Judgment of G o d upon Atheism and Infidelity. For tho' G o d is pleased, for the most part, to remit great Offenders to the Judgment of the great Day ; yet he does sometimes in the World manifest his Wrath and Indignation against these impious and ungodly Wretches, who brave his Power and Justice by their wicked abusing his Grace, their bold despising his Word, and impudent denying his Being : In the Case sometimes interposes in so visible a manner, that all the World may see that the Hand of the Almighty is in it ; and may consider, and fear, and do no more so wickedly. Wherefore do not look upon the Case of this wretched Man, as a mere Accident, or common Misfortune ; rather confess and adore the just Judgment of G o d, that will not be mocked. This miserable Man had perverted his own Reason, abused the Grace of G o d, stood out against Light and Truth, despised the Scriptures, affronted Divine Ordinances, and denied the Lord his Maker ; and what juster, or heavier Judgment could befall such a One, than to be forsaken of G o d, to be deprived of the use of his Reason, to have all Grace withdrawn from him, to be left to his blind and desperate Passions, to be enslaved to his Lust, to fall from one Wickedness to another, to act like a mad Man, to be given up to Terror and Horror of Mind, to feel the heavy Burden of his own Wickedness, Guilt and Misery, and yet to have no Glimpse of Hope within, but to be fill'd with the Agonies of Despair, and stung with the perpetual Remorse of a condemning Conscience. Who knows, or who can express, the terrible Anguish, and dreadful Torment of Mind that he often suffer'd ! And then to be abandon'd at last, to commit that unnatural and barbarous Murder upon himself, to die in that Sin where there is no Repentance, and consequently no Mercy—— What more dreadful Judgment could befall a Man in this World. But what must he expect that contends with G o d ! What can he look for who defies his Maker, and makes a Scorn of his Redeemer ! Whosoever therefore seriously reflects upon this, and such other signal Manifestations of G o d's J U D G M E N T s upon daring Sinners, must acknowledge with the Psalmist, *Verily there is a G O D that judgeth in the Earth.*

F I N I S.

MUSEUM



o consider  
avy Judge  
tho' Go  
ders to the  
nes in the  
st these in  
and Justice  
going to  
Cales in  
the World  
and may  
Wherefore  
as a mee  
and adon  
ed. The  
abused the  
n, despise  
denied the  
ment could  
be depriv  
withdraw  
fions, to be  
to another  
and Horro  
ickedness  
hope with  
and sting  
Conscience  
guish, an  
And the  
and barbar  
re there  
— What  
his World  
p! What  
a Scorn o  
flects upon  
's Judge  
e with the  
e Earth.